

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 9050

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, TS
SUBJ: ACHOUR/BROWN RELATIONSHIP

REF: STATE 300776

1. CURRENT EVIDENCE LEADS US TO AGREE WITH BROWN'S REPORTED ANALYSIS OF ACHOUR'S PRESENT SITUATION. MANY OF ACHOUR'S RECENT TROUBLES WITH GOT ARE INDEED THE FRUITS OF HIS OWN LOOM. EVIDENCE ABOUNDS THAT SOME OF ACHOUR'S ACTIONS RELATE MORE CLOSELY TO HIS PERSONAL AMBITIONS THAN TO THE BROADER INTERESTS OF UGTT MEMBERSHIP. SITUATION IS FURTHER CLUED BY INDICATIONS THAT SOME UGTT RANK AND FILE ARE NO LONGER MARCHING TO ACHOUR'S DRUM. (EXAMPLE: REPORTED FRICTION BETWEEN EDITORIAL STAFF OF UGTT WEEKLY ECH-CHAAB AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, GROWING WILDCATting IN RAILROADS AND OTHER SECTORS, AND REPUTED GENERATION AND ATTITUDINAL GAPS OPENING BETWEEN UGTT LEADERSHIP AROUND ACHOUR AND UNION'S MID-LEVEL CADRES.)

2. WE KNOW OF NO SERIOUS GOT PLAN TO INITIATE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ACHOUR, BUT IT IS HARDLY A SECRET THAT ACHOUR'S RELATIONS WITH GOT (PARTICULARLY PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA AND PSD PARTY DIRECTOR SAYAH) ARE STRAINED. MOREOVER, AMPLE PROPAGANDA PRESSURE NOW BEING EXERTED, WITH GOT AND
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PARTY EXHORTATIONS FOR "NATIONAL UNITY BY ALL NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS" RECEIVING HEAVY PRESS PLAY. WE THINK ACHOUR MAY HAVE SOUGHT TO USE BROWN'S PERSONAL PRESTIGE (AND IMPLIED AFL-CIO SUPPORT) IN CONTEXT OF HIS ONGOING FIGHT WITH GOT, RATHER THAN HAVE BROWN PLAY MEDIATING ROLE PER SE. TOO, ACHOUR MAY HAVE CALCULATED THAT BROWN COULD INTERVENE USEFULLY ON HIS BEHALF WITH GOT IN VIEW OF

BROWN'S LONG STANDING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH BOTH
BOURGUIBA AND NOUIRA.

3. WE HAVE HAD NO COMMUNICATION WITH BROWN SINCE HIS LAST
VISIT TO TUNISIA IN SEPT 77. WE CONSIDER IT TOO EARLY TO
CONCLUDE THAT ACHOUR HAS "LOST CONFIDENCE AND/OR FRIENDSHIP
OF BROWN AND/OR AFL-CIO" AS SUGGESTED IN REFTEL. JUST LAST
MONTH BROWN ALLEGEDLY SENT ACHOUR A TELEGRAM EXPRESSING
PERSONAL SUPPORT AT TIME ACHOUR WAS CLAIMING TO HAVE BEEN
TARGET OF ASSASSINATION PLOT. ALSO, ACHOUR RECENTLY TOLD LABATT
THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH BROWN BY TELEPHONE TWO WEEKS AGO DURING
ACHOUR'S TRIP TO ICFTU/BRUSSELS.

4. IN SUM, WE DO NOT THINK QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN BROWN/AFL-CIO AND ACHOUR/UGTT WILL MATERIALLY
AFFECT INTERNAL POLITICAL DYNAMIC NOW UNFOLDING. WE DO TEND
TOWARD AGREEMENT WITH BROWN THAT THIS IS NOT TIME FOR HIM
OR AFL-CIO TO BECOME INVOLVED DIRECTLY IN WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY
A TUNISIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONFRONTATION WHICH HAS LITTLE,
IF ANYTHING, TO DO WITH BROADER TRADE UNION OR WORKER INTERESTS.
HOWEVER, WE WELCOME AND CONSIDER USEFUL ANY ONGOING COMMUNICATIONS
WHICH MAY EXIST BETWEEN BROWN AND ACHOUR.
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